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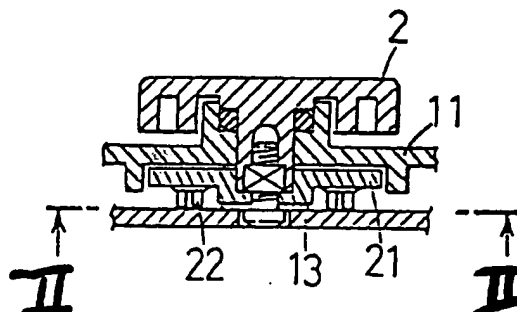
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(54) **Bicycle control device having a rotatable dial**

(57) A bicycle control device includes a base member (1) adapted to be mounted to a structural member of a bicycle, a dial (2) rotatably mounted to the base member (1), a detent mechanism operatively associated with the dial (2) for providing a detenting force to the dial (2) at a plurality of rotational positions of the dial (2), and a first electromagnetic switching member (22) op-

erated by the dial (2) for selectively electromagnetically communicating with a second electromagnetic switching member (13) when the dial (2) is positioned at each of the plurality of rotational positions. A button (4,5) and/or display (3) may be disposed in proximity to the dial (2) to allow the rider to control the bicycle transmission and to view the status of the selected gears, respectively.

Figure 3



Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to bicycle control devices and, more particularly, to a bicycle control device that includes a rotatable dial that may be manipulated by the rider's hand.

Some bicycles that have been proposed feature the use of an automatic shifter, whereby bicycle shifting is managed by an electric motor, actuator, or the like, and automatic shifting is managed on the basis of detected data such as the bicycle speed, the torque applied to the crank spindle, and the like. The automatic shifting of such automatic shifters should have a plurality of automatic shifting modes, such as an automatic shifting mode for flat terrain and an automatic shifting mode for uphill terrain. This is because the optimal shift timing varies depending on the incline of the road, the operator leg power, and the like. It is also sometimes necessary to switch from automatic shifting mode to manual shifting mode.

In the past, a lever type of switch has been used to switch between the plurality of shifting modes. However, because conventional lever types of switches protrude, there is a risk that gears will be shifted by unintentional operation of the lever. Particularly on extremely rough roads, there is considerable potential for the operator's hand to inadvertently strike the lever, resulting in unintended shifting.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

According to the present invention there is provided a bicycle control device in accordance with Claim 1. Preferred embodiments provide a control device for a bicycle whereby shifting modes and the like are reliably switched by the operator at a location that is readily at hand, with less potential for accidental switching. In one embodiment of the present invention, a bicycle control device includes a base member adapted to be mounted to a structural member of a bicycle, a dial rotatably mounted to the base member, a detent mechanism operatively associated with the dial for providing a detenting force to the dial at a plurality of rotational positions of the dial, and a first electromagnetic switching member operated by the dial for selectively electromagnetically communicating with a second electromagnetic switching member when the dial is positioned at each of the plurality of rotational positions. The switch may provide electromagnetic signals for controlling a plurality of bicycle transmission shift modes. A button and/or display may be disposed in proximity to the dial to allow the rider to control the bicycle transmission and to view the status of the selected gears, respectively.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a particular embodiment of a bicycle control device according to the invention mounted to a handlebar;

Figure 2 is a view taken along line II-II in Figure 3; and

Figure 3 is a cross sectional view of a particular embodiment of the dial and electrical contacts used in the bicycle control device shown in Figure 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a particular embodiment of a bicycle control device according to the invention mounted to a handlebar 8. As shown in Figure 1, a switch 1 is provided at a location adjacent to the right hand grip 9 of the bicycle handlebar 8. The switch 1 is provided with a generally circular rotatable rotating dial 2. The bottom of the rotating dial 2 can be rotated by the thumb of the right hand to switch positions. The outer peripheral edge of the rotating dial 2 has a slight texture to enhance friction force.

The switching positions of the rotating dial 2 include a manual shift mode M, a first automatic shift mode A1, a second automatic shift mode A2, and a park mode P. Each mode letter should line up with the downward facing triangle mark at the top of the switch 1. A clicking sensation produced by a detent mechanism described below is produced at each switch position, allowing switching operations to be confirmed.

No automatic shifting is performed in manual shift mode M. Instead, manual shifting is managed with an up shift button 4 and a down shift button 5. The first automatic shift mode A1 is for automatic shifting on flat terrain. The shift timing is calculated on the basis of detected data such as the bicycle speed and the torque applied to the crank spindle, and the shifting operations are performed automatically by an electric motor, actuator, or the like. Shifting can also be done manually at the same time by operating the up shift button 4 and down shift button 5. The second automatic shift mode A2 is for automatic shifting on uphill terrain. In this mode, the shift operations shift to a lower speed side than the first automatic shift mode A1. Park mode P locks and prevents the drive wheel from rotating. The bicycle can be parked in a stable manner, even when parked on inclined terrain or sloped roads, because the drive wheel is locked. While the bicycle is running, that is, while the drive wheel is turning, a safety function prevents the drive wheel from becoming locked if the rotating dial 2 should inadvertently be set to park mode P.

The switch 1 is provided with a display means 3. The shift position of the front change gear device is displayed on the left side of the display means 3, and the shift position of the rear change gear device is displayed on the right side. The current shift state can be seen at a glance on the display means 3. Liquid crystal display

panels, light-emitting diodes, and the like can be used as the display means 3.

Figures 2 and 3 depict the internal structure of the switch 1. The rotating dial 2 and a brush platform 21 are locked by a screw and rotate together. A first electro-
magnetic switching member in the form of a brush 22
consisting of a conductive material is fixed to the brush
platform 21, and an electrical connection with a second
electromagnetic switching member in the form of an
electrical contact provided on a base plate 13. The first
and second electromagnetic switching members selec-
tively communicate according to the rotating position of
the rotating dial 2.

An elastic convex component 23 is provided on one
side of the brush platform 21. The brush platform 21 and
the elastic convex component 23 are integrally formed
of resin. In the top cover 11, at positions facing the elas-
tic convex component 23, concave components 12 are
provided in a plurality of locations corresponding to the
plurality of switching positions of the rotating dial 2. The
elastic convex component 23 fits into a concave compo-
nent 12, thus forming the detent mechanism which
produces a detenting force to the rotating dial 2. The
detenting force guides the rotating dial 2 into the various
switching positions and ensures reliable switching op-
erations.

Since switching operations are effected by the ro-
tating dial as described above, there are no protruding
parts such as levers, thus reducing the potential for un-
intended operation of the control device

While the above is a description of various embod-
iments of the present invention, further modifications
may be employed without departing from the spirit and
scope of the present invention. For example, the size,
shape, location or orientation of the various components
may be changed as desired. The functions of one ele-
ment may be performed by two, and vice versa. In the
aforementioned embodiment, the switch is used to
switch shift modes, but it can also be used for other
switching operations such as turning a light on and off,
or switching the modes of a bicycle display device. The
switch display means can be used for displays other
than the shift position, such as the running speed, dis-
tance travelled, or the like. In such cases, a display
switch button that switches the display on the display
means should be provided. Thus, the scope of the in-
vention should not be limited by the specific structures
disclosed. Instead, the true scope of the invention
should be determined by the following claims.

Claims

1. A bicycle control device comprising:

a base member adapted to be mounted to a
structural member of a bicycle;
a dial rotatably mounted to the base member;

a detent mechanism operatively associated
with the dial for providing a detenting force to
the dial at a plurality of rotational positions of
the dial; and

a first electromagnetic switching member oper-
ated by the dial for selectively electromagneti-
cally communicating with a second electromag-
netic switching member when the dial is posi-
tioned at each of the plurality of rotational posi-
tions.

2. The device according to claim 1 wherein the first
and second electromagnetic switching members
provide electromagnetic signals for controlling a
plurality of bicycle transmission shift modes.
3. The device according to claim 2 wherein the plural-
ity of bicycle transmission shift modes comprise:

a manual operation shift mode;
an automatic shift mode; and
a park mode.

4. The device according to claim 3 wherein the auto-
matic shift mode includes:

a first automatic shift mode; and
a second automatic shift mode.

5. The device according to any preceding claim further
comprising:

a manually operated button disposed in prox-
imity to the dial.

6. The device according to any preceding claim further
comprising:

display means disposed in proximity to the di-
al for displaying alphanumeric information.

7. The device according to claim 6 wherein the display
means comprises an electrical display.

8. The device according to any preceding claim
wherein the first electromagnetic switching member
comprises a conductive brush that rotates with the
dial.

9. The device according to any preceding claim further
comprising:

a cover having a plurality of concave compo-
nents formed on an inner peripheral surface
thereof;

an elastic convex component that rotates with
the dial for selectively engaging the plurality of
concave components; and

wherein the plurality of concave components
and the elastic convex component form the de-

tent mechanism.

10. The device according to claim 9 wherein the dial is disposed on a first side of the cover and the elastic convex component is disposed on an opposite second side of the cover. 5
11. The device according to any of Claims 1 to 8 further comprising: 10
- a cover, wherein the dial is disposed on an external first side of the cover;
a platform disposed on an opposite second side of the cover and connected to the dial for rotation therewith; and 15
a conductive brush disposed on the platform for forming the first electromagnetic switching member.
12. The device according to claim 11 wherein the cover 20 includes a plurality of concave components formed on an inner peripheral surface thereof, wherein the platform includes an elastic convex component for selectively engaging the plurality of concave components, and wherein the plurality of concave components and the elastic convex component form the detent mechanism. 25
13. The device according to any preceding claim further comprising a handlebar, wherein the base member 30 is mounted to the handlebar in proximity to a hand grip of the handlebar.

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Figure 1

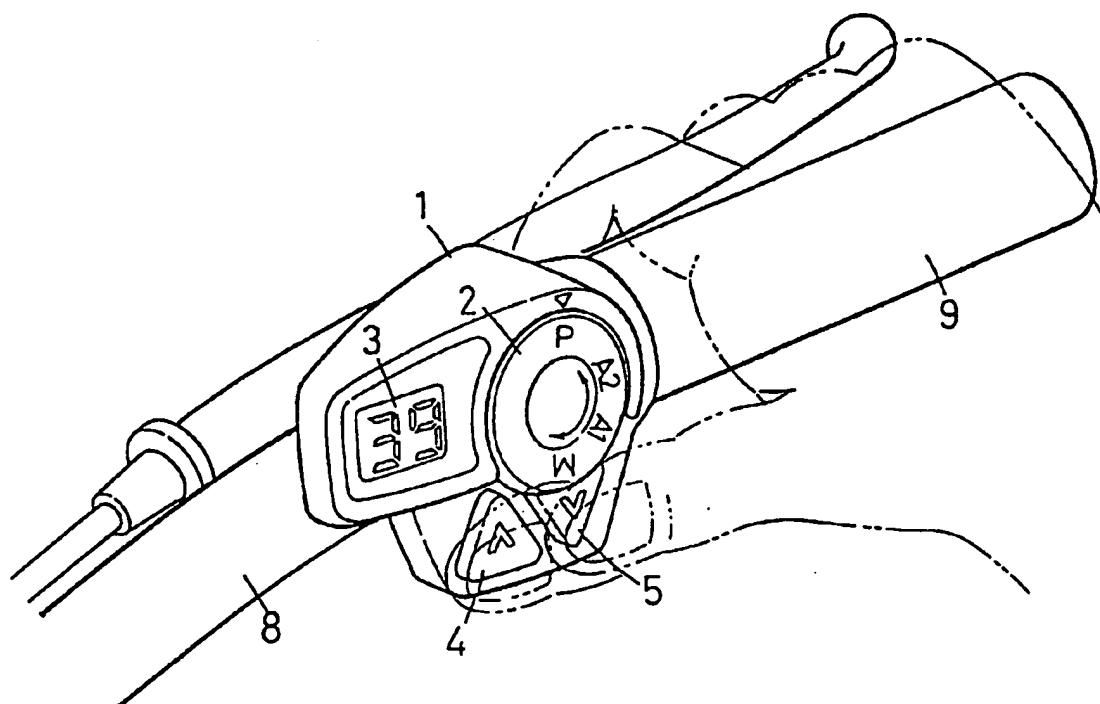


Figure 2

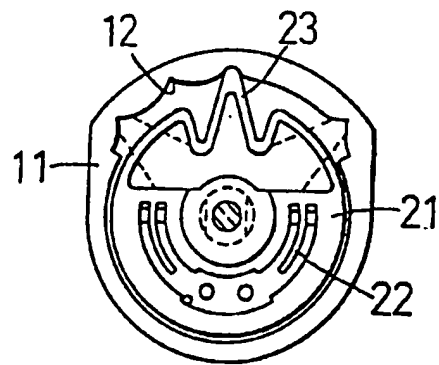
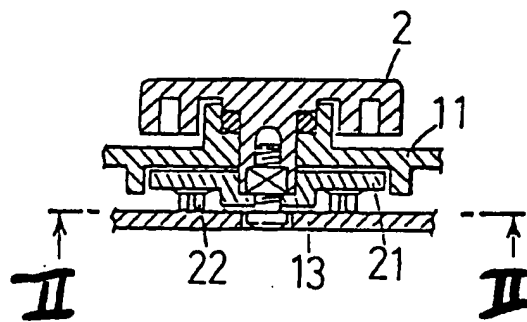


Figure 3



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number

EP 97 31 0043

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.8)
X	US 5 551 315 A (PIKOULAS) 3 September 1996 * column 5, line 65 - column 6, line 47 *	1	B62M25/08 B62M25/04 B62K23/02
A	EP 0 566 025 A (FICHTEL & SACHS) 20 October 1993 * the whole document *	1	
A	US 5 261 858 A (BROWNING) 16 November 1993 * abstract *	1	
P,X	DE 196 42 906 A (CAMPAGNOLO) 24 April 1997 * figure 4 *	1	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.8)
			B62M B62K
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 24 April 1998	Examiner Denicolai, G
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